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Anne W McNeill 10/10/2006 04:21:21 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L                      WARSAW 01676

SIPDIS  
CXWARSAW:  
ACTION: POL  
INFO: AMB MGT KRA PASC ORA AGRI ODC ECON DCM DAO CONS  
RSO FCS

DISSEMINATION: POLO  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: DCM:KHILLAS  
DRAFTED: POL:JGORKOWSKI  
CLEARED: DAO: HNOWAK

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PP RUEHC RUEKJCS RHMFISS RHEHAAA RUEKJCS RHEHNSC  
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1640  
INFO RUEKJCS/USSOCOM WO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM JFMO VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 001676

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PL](#)  
SUBJECT: MISSILE DEFENSE: STRONG POLITICAL WILL IN POLAND

REF: STATE 01522

Classified By: CDA Kenneth Hillas for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Public opposition to hosting a U.S. MD site in Poland is, as the opposition to the Iraq War, thin and not strongly felt. All major political parties on the left and the right continue to support an MD site, and the government leadership is committed to the project. There is no doubt that an MD Agreement would pass with a strong majority in the Sejm, especially given PM Jaroslaw Kaczynski's dominance of the government coalition. Public media coverage of MD has outpaced the official dialogue, and, with its concerns about Polish national security and extraterritoriality, does not accurately reflect the Polish political dynamic. MD Post strongly believes that the GOP expects a U.S. decision to deploy both ground based interceptors and radar in Poland, and anything less would be perceived as a policy failure. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Poland's political reliability as a defense and security relations with the United States is exceptional. There are few countries in the world where alternating shifts of government power between the left and the right have had virtually no impact on the strategic relationship with the United States. This long-term predictability is an important asset as the USG approaches a decision on MD.

13. (C) The GOP believes that it has addressed earlier U.S. questions and concerns, making clear that there are no preconditions, that MD is viewed as a net gain for Polish national security, and that there are no legal or procedural

problems related to MD implementation. Therefore, the GOP expects that it will be selected for deployment of both a ground based interceptor (GBI) site and ground based radar (GBR) facility, unless there are clear technical advantages to locating elsewhere. In post's view, a different outcome, including a split decision placing GBI in one country and launchers in another, would not be understood by the GOP and could have a negative impact on our strategic partnership.

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Unofficial Media Speculation Colors Public Perception  
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¶4. (U) In recent weeks, Polish press commentary on MD Consultations have increasingly refereed to U.S. demands for "extra-territoriality" for MD facilities, "exclusive rights" for missile launch decision, and "U.S. law" jurisdiction over base personnel. The media overlooks the fact that none of these items have yet been negotiated, as the MD process is still in the consultation phase. Hence, the public debate has outpaced the official dialogue. This out-of-control speculation colors public opinion and has contributed to doubts on the part of the Polish public, which is already sensitive to foreign bases after 50 years of sizeable and threatening military occupation by Nazi and later Soviet forces.

¶5. (U) The respected Polish daily, Rzeczpospolita, recently conducted a poll in which 63% of Poles opposed locating MD assets in Poland and only 23% supported such action, up from 54% opposed in June and 32% opposed in December 2005. However, while public opposition to MD seems to be growing, this is primarily a function of a lack of information and a response to suggestions that Polish sovereignty would be diminished. The GOP does not view public opinion as an obstacle and has developed a public relations strategy that it would employ once USG makes a decision on MD.

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Disconnect Between Polls and Policy: the Iraq Example  
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¶6. (U) Public opposition to MD has not and is not likely to translate into opposition by key political leaders. Iraq offers a valuable example. Despite strong public opposition over time, Poland has maintained a leading role in Iraq. In March 2005, only 26% of Poles polled by the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) thought that Poland should, "remain there until the end of the mission," while a February 2006 CBOS poll found that 72% of Poles opposed their nation's presence in Iraq. However, this "opposition" never translated into a lack of political will in Poland. In fact, the Poles are considering expanding their involvement in the Global War on Terrorism by deploying more troops to Afghanistan, where they are even more likely to encounter casualties. Post expects that the same phenomenon will apply. That is, the public may grumble about MD, but it is not an issue around which political action will coalesce.

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Venting the Pressure  
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¶7. (C) To be sure, the GOP is not entirely immune to public opinion. The declaration this week by the President's chief of staff that Poland would not allow "extraterritoriality" for an MD site responds to media speculation on this issue, some of which may have been engendered and supported by Russian interests. It is notable that the only party to speak out publicly and clearly against deploying MD in Poland is Self-Defense (SO), whose leader Andrzej Lepper has surrounded himself with cast-offs from the Communist military and security services. Indeed, PM Kaczynski believes that SO was "inspired" by Russia.

¶8. (C) Some Polish commentators have speculated that Poland's target profile will increase if it hosts MD. There is no doubt that the MD discussions have energized the GOP's interest in enhancing its own national air defense capabilities, and this will be a topic for further discussion with the USG. However, Poland's MD working group has made

clear that security assistance in this area is not a precondition for an MD agreement. Indeed, they undertook to keep this topic off the agenda of our MD exchanges. (See reftel)

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Political Stability Will Anchor Any MD Site  
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¶9. (U) COMMENT: Despite public opinion polls, Poland has demonstrated itself a dependable and unwavering U.S. strategic partner. This stability sets Poland apart and represents a significant asset in terms of long-term political reliability. One of the few countries in the world where shifts in government between the left and right have had virtually no impact on defense and security policy, Poland is exceptional for the depth and breadth of its strategic partnership with the United States.

¶10. (C) The GOP believes that it has allayed any concerns the USG may have had regarding possible linkages between MD and security assistance, the GOP view of MD's contribution to Poland's security, or legal problems connected to an MD agreement. On these critical issues, there are is no space between the U.S. and Polish positions. Senior Polish diplomats have made clear that, having addressed those concerns and made clear their interest in MD, The USG will no doubt select Poland for any European MD site, unless there are clear technical reasons for going elsewhere. The Chair of the Polish MD Working Group has made clear that any other decision would be hard for the GOP to understand and would be viewed as an explicit decision by Washington to devalue the U.S.-Polish strategic relationship. A "split decision" to deploy GBI and GBR in separate countries would also be viewed as a political loss for Poland. In Post's view, the USG would have to manage serious political fall-out in its relations with Poland should there be a decision to deploy MD in another European country. The repercussions are difficult to predict but the risk is nonetheless real. END COMMENT.  
HILLAS